

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 DOE-11 SOE-02 /083 W
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5607
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 0864

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: WALI SEEKS CENTER STAGE

REF: A) ISLAMABAD 0664 B) PESHAWAR A-1 C) ISLAMABAD 0335

1. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, KHAN ABDUL WALI KHAN HAS FORMALLY SUBMITTED HIS PROPOSAL FOR A ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE OF POLITICIANS ON "THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS" TO THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES AND TO THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH PRESUMABLY MEANS TO CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR (CMLA) GENERAL ZIA. WALI HAS BEEN TALKING UP THE IDEA FOR SEVERAL WEEKS AND IS REPORTEDLY
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OPTIMISTIC THAT A ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

2. THIS SUGGESTION CAN BE VIEWED AS PART OF WALI'S ATTEMPT (REFTEL A) TO RETAIN THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT AND TO CLOAK HIMSELF IN THE GARB OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND POLITICAL PROGRESS. THERE ARE MANY IN THE COUNTRY, HOWEVER, WHO WILL LOOK ASKANCE AT WALI'S

PROPOSED CONFERENCE, FEELING IT WILL SERVE ONLY HIS INTERESTS.

3. SEVERAL LEADERS OF THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE (PNA), WHOSE RELATIONS WITH WALI ARE ALREADY AMBIGUOUS AT BEST, HAVE EITHER BEEN OPPOSED TO SUCH A CONVOCATION OR HAVE ADOPTED A MEANINGFUL SILENCE. POLITICAL OBSERVERS SAY THAT THE PNA'S LEADERSHIP CAN HARDLY BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT A MOVE DESIGNED TO SHIFT THE FOCUS OF PUBLIC ATTENTION AWAY FROM THEM, AND, AS DIFFERENCES AMONG PNA CONSTITUENT PARTIES GROW, SEVERAL IN THE PNA SAY THE ALLIANCE SHOULD FIRST PUT ITS OWN HOUSE IN ORDER BEFORE ATTENDING A ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE. PPP LEADERS DO NOT PRESENTLY SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL THEY WOULD ATTEND A CONFERENCE CALLED BY WALI; ATTENDANCE COULD BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT THE PPP IS WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH THE PNA AND MLA. ASGHAR KHAN WOULD ALSO BE EXPECTED TO SHY AWAY FROM WALI'S CONFERENCE FOR FEAR OF BEING OVERSHADOWED.

4. CALLS FOR ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCES SUCH AS WALI HAS PROPOSED HAVE A DUBIOUS PAST IN PAKISTAN. THE MOST RECENT WAS THAT PROPOSED BY FORMER PRESIDENT YAHYA KHAN TO CONSIDER THE EAST PAKISTAN ISSUE. FURTHER COMPLICATING PAKISTANI ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE MAY BE MEMORIES OF THE BHUTTO - PNA NEGOTIATIONS OF LAST SUMMER, WHOSE LENGTHY PROCEEDINGS AND ULTIMATE DEADLOCK LED TO THE MILITARY TAKEOVER. CMLA ZIA HAS ALSO TRIED TO GET POLITICIANS TOGETHER, BUT WITHOUT PPP PARTICIPATION. THE RESULTS WERE INSUBSTANTIAL, AND HE HAS YET TO

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ADDRESS HIMSELF TO WALI'S CALL.
HUMMEL

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NNN

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